

I appreciate these points. Obviously, we have a disagreement. President Trump pushed for Congress to pass a payroll tax cut. I would rather see a cut, not a deferral. That is the way to really help workers across this country. When Congress failed to act in July, the President enacted that deferral as a way to provide immediate relief to the American people. I would ask that we come together and let's forgive those taxes. Forgive them, and they won't be getting a surprise tax increase if we do that.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, just very briefly in response, I think everyone knows what is going on here. This is a very simple proposal. If you want to participate in President Trump's deferral, you can continue to participate in the deferral program. But if you are in the Armed Forces or are a Federal employee and you are being required to do that right now and you don't want to, we should let them opt out. That is all this is about, and I am really surprised that our Republican colleagues would block members of our Armed Forces and Federal employees from making a simple choice which they believe is in their best interest.

So I am disappointed with the objection and will continue to pursue this.

Thank you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. DAINES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to yield back the time in order for the vote to occur now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON HARDY NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Hardy nomination?

Mr. DAINES. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from North Carolina (Mr. BURR), the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. INHOFE), the Senator from Georgia (Mrs. LOEFFLER), the Senator from Georgia (Mr. PERDUE), and the Senator from Ohio (Mr. PORTMAN).

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. HARRIS) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. CAPITO). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 59, nays 34, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 253 Ex.]

YEAS—59

Alexander	Blunt	Capito
Barrasso	Boozman	Cardin
Blackburn	Braun	Carper

Cassidy	Hyde-Smith
Collins	Johnson
Cornyn	Jones
Cotton	Kelly
Cramer	Kennedy
Crapo	King
Cruz	Lankford
Daines	Lee
Enzi	Manchin
Ernst	McConnell
Fischer	Moran
Gardner	Murkowski
Graham	Murphy
Grassley	Paul
Hassan	Reed
Hawley	Risch
Hoeven	Roberts

NAYS—34

Baldwin	Gillibrand	Schatz
Bennet	Heinrich	Schumer
Blumenthal	Hirono	Smith
Booker	Kaine	Stabenow
Brown	Klobuchar	Udall
Cantwell	Leahy	Van Hollen
Casey	Markey	Warner
Coons	Menendez	Warren
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Whitehouse
Duckworth	Murray	Wyden
Durbin	Peters	
Feinstein	Rosen	

NOT VOTING—7

Burr	Loeffler	Sanders
Harris	Perdue	
Inhofe	Portman	

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The Senator from Tennessee.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be recognized to speak for as long as I may require.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNIZING THE STAFF OF SENATOR ALEXANDER

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, here is my view of serving in the U.S. Senate: It is hard to get here, it is hard to stay here, and while you are here, you might as well try to accomplish something good for the country. Accomplishing something good in the U.S. Senate means working with a superior staff.

Today, I want to pay tribute to the 270 men and women who have served on my staff since I came to the Senate in 2003, in my personal office, both here in Washington, DC, and in the six Tennessee offices; in the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee; the Senate Rules Committee;

the Senate Appropriations Committee; and at the Senate Republican conference.

Some who started with me in 2003 are still working for me after 18 years, and some have moved on to other opportunities, but each has played a major role in the Senate, whether they were helping to pass laws, serve our constituents, or answering the front-office phone.

We have some important traditions here in the Senate, including the maiden speech, which I delivered 17 years ago, in my case, and the farewell speech, which I delivered yesterday, but for me, something is missing. Usually staff is acknowledged in the farewell address, which either makes the address way too long or at least too little time to properly acknowledge their contributions. I am here today to make a "Salute to the Staff" speech. I know my colleagues agree that their own accomplishments are the result of working with superior staff, so perhaps, if I may not be presumptuous, a "Salute to the Staff" speech might become an additional Senate tradition.

When I say "superior staff," here is what I mean: superior in being what Senator Howard Baker used to call an eloquent listener—that the constituent on the phone might be right or even the staffer in the other office might be right; superior in courtesy to the Tennesseans for whom we work; superior in insight; superior in resolving complex issues and wrapping up the result in a nice package with a ribbon tied around it, ready to be passed and signed into law whenever the moment came that it could be passed, which would usually be a surprise and at an inconvenient time; and superior in writing and speaking plain English in order to persuade at least half the people we are right; and superior in working well together—something you are supposed to learn in kindergarten—so we have a good time while we are working.

Unlike almost every other Senate office, at the suggestion of my chief of staff, David Cleary, we created a single team composed of personal office staff here and in Washington, DC, and the committee staff, with David in charge of all of that. I originally thought that was a big mistake. I didn't see how anyone could be in charge of all of that, but I was wrong about it because what it did was break down barriers and eliminate jealousy, improve communication, and create a much happier and effective working condition.

The results have been exceptional. For 18 years, I have gotten up every morning thinking I might be able to do something good to help our country, and I have gone to bed most nights thinking that I have. That couldn't have happened without the privilege of working with an exceptional staff.

The truth is—we all know this—that there is just no physical way for any U.S. Senator to see every single one of our constituents every time we want to